

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION
OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS

(Section of the Library
Association)

Acting Hon. Editor: W. B. Stevenson

Hendon Public Libraries



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EDITORIAL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AS already intimated, the Annual General Meeting is to be held this year on 14th June in London. The programme is as follows:

1.15 p.m. Lunch at Selfridge's.

2.30 p.m. Tour to lesser-known places of interest in London, commencing from Portman Square.

4.30 p.m. Tea at Coventry Street Corner House.

6.0 p.m. Annual business meeting at Chaucer House.

All provincial members are being invited to the entire programme by the London members of the Association. Will provincial members wishing to be present please send their names in to Mr. W. C. Pugsley, Branch Library, High Road, Chadwell Heath, not later than 7th June, stating whether they will be present from 1.15 p.m. onwards or for any particular part of the proceedings.

London members are invited to be present for the whole or part of the programme, and will be admitted by ticket, obtainable from Mr. Pugsley. For the whole day the ticket will be 5s., or 2s. for each of the three items—lunch, tour, and tea.

A sparsely attended, but successful, meeting of the Association was held at the Surbiton Library on Wednesday, 10th May.

After inspection of the library—a well-planned and efficient building decorated in modern style—members were invited to tea in the Town Hall by kind invitation of Councillor Durbin, Chairman of the Libraries Committee. After tea Mr. A. L. Carver, of Portsmouth, delivered a paper on "The New Librarianship," and raised a storm of criticism from the younger members present. Mr. Carver's paper was mainly a plea for the recognition of librarianship as a vocation, and his idealism was not relished by the modernists present. Replying in suitable terms to his critics, Mr. Carver reaffirmed his principles, and left us with the pleasant impression of having been roused from our usual docility.

We deeply regret to inform our readers that Mrs. W. G. Fry, the wife of the retiring President, passed away recently after a long illness. On behalf of the members at large an expression of sincere regret and sympathy has been sent to Mr. Fry and his sons in their sad bereavement.

The Librarian would be pleased to receive copies of the following numbers of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT to complete the file.

1931, vol. 24: Nos. 1, 7, 10, 11.

1932, vol. 25: No. 2.

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Students are reminded that applications for the alternative courses in the Intermediate Section must reach Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, S.E.24, before 20th June. Students awaiting the results of the May examinations may join the courses up to 15th July. After these dates no applications will be considered. It is also pointed out that no student will receive his or her course until at least one week after the respective closing dates.

All applications for the pamphlet on cataloguing, advertised in this journal, should be sent direct to the author, Mr. J. Ormerod, Central Library, Derby.

MAY COUNCIL MEETING

THE Annual Council Meeting was held on Wednesday, 17th May, at Chaucer House. The following is a résumé of some of the more important matters discussed.

It was decided to reprint Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers's "Grammar of classification" in an early number of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

A proposal that editors be appointed for each section of the Correspondence Courses was favourably considered and referred to the Courses Sub-Committee. A tribute was paid to the work of Mr. S. W. Martin, the Honorary Courses Secretary, whose industry has been untiring.

An interesting suggestion that three of the meetings for next session should be linked by a common theme under the general title of "The Library and the community" was approved.

The recommendations of the Forward Policy Committee were adopted after discussion, and are reprinted elsewhere in this issue.

A revised scheme for Council meetings was adopted. This scheme will ensure that all Councillors will be able to attend the five meetings, which will be held in September, November, January, March, and May. The railway fares of Councillors will be defrayed partly from Central and Divisional Funds, and partly by the Councillor himself. The formal amendment to Rule 5 (d) which is to be considered at the Annual General Meeting arises from the adoption of the revised scheme.

Mr. R. D. Hilton Smith, the Honorary Secretary, was appointed as official delegate to the Library Association Conference, 1933.

It was decided to invite a member of the North-Western Division to read a paper before the General Meeting of the Central Association during the coming session.

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REPORT OF THE FORWARD POLICY COMMITTEE

RESOLUTIONS APPROVED AT THE MAY MEETING OF THE A.A.L. COUNCIL

(1) **T**HAT this Meeting of the National Council of the A.A.L. Section, held on 17th May, 1933, having carefully considered the recent Report on the HOURS, SALARIES, TRAINING, AND CONDITIONS IN BRITISH MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES, and the Questionnaires which formed the basis of that Report, strongly urges the Council of the Library Association to make the greatest efforts within its power to induce the Library authorities of certain backward districts to improve the hours and conditions of service in the libraries under their control.

(2) This Council therefore requests that the Questionnaire received in connection with the above Report shall be forwarded to the Secretary of the Library Association, with those relating to backward districts marked and annotated, and suggests

(3) That the L.A. Council instruct its Secretary to write to the Chief Librarians of the selected libraries, forwarding a copy of the Report, and pointing out that in certain specified sections the Questionnaire shows that conditions of service, etc., are below the average as revealed by the A.A.L. Report, and asking that the matter be brought before the Libraries Committee, and that the L.A. be informed of the results of this action.

(4) That a copy of the printed Report, together with a covering letter, be sent to the Town Clerk, or Clerk to the Council, after consultation with the Chief Librarian.

THIS Council further strongly urges :

(5) That with regard to salaries, and in view of the criticisms to which the whole of the Local Government Service is now being subjected, the closest relations possible be maintained with the NALGO, particularly with a view to supporting actively the NALGO Bureau of Information, in order that the public may be kept fully aware of the value of the work of the public libraries of the country, and suggests that the L.A. Council recommend all who are eligible to join the NALGO.

(6) And that the L.A. Council, through the mediums of the *Record*, the Year Book, etc., recommend to all Libraries and Library Committees :

(a) *Hours*.—That every effort should be made to reduce staff working hours to a maximum of 39 per week.

(b) *Sunday Duty*.—That Sunday duty be optional, and, when worked, be

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compensated by double time off duty in lieu or by double pay, at the discretion of the assistant working.

- (c) *Overtime.* That when members of the staff are detained beyond the normal closing hours for lectures or extra library activities they should receive extra pay at the minimum rate of time and a quarter for overtime thus worked. Overtime worked at other periods should be compensated either by time off in lieu, or by payment at the above rate.
- (d) *Evening Duty.*—That the number of evenings on duty after 5 or 5.30 p.m. should not exceed three per week.
- (e) *Holidays.*—That under no circumstances should any assistant who has completed 12 months' service receive less than 12 working days' holiday per annum.
- (f) *Sick Leave.*—That in cases of illness, leave on full pay be paid up to a period of six months.
- (g) *Unpaid Pupil Assistants.*—That with the sole exception of foreign librarians who are resident in the U.K. for a limited period, unpaid assistants (pupil or otherwise) should not be allowed to work in rate-supported libraries.
- (h) *Professional Assistance.*—That librarians be requested to communicate with the L.A. before consenting to render professional assistance to Local Authorities who are forming or reconstructing a library service, AND that a minimum fee for such assistance, if rendered, be decided upon, the L.A. COUNCIL to advise whether the fee should be demanded, or whether the circumstances justify assistance without charge.



LIBRARY CO-OPERATION

AN OUTLINE OF OBJECTS, METHODS, AND ACHIEVEMENTS¹

By J. H. PAFFORD, *National Central Library*

UNTIL about the beginning of this century a library's service was generally supposed to begin and end within its own walls, or at least to begin and end with what it could do from its own resources. What it does in this way is still—for the majority of libraries—its greatest service. A library with a good working stock, well organized and managed by an efficient staff, is an institution which,

¹ A paper given at a meeting of the section at the Islington Central Library on 8th March, 1933.

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within its own walls, and from its own resources, does a service to the community of the greatest importance. In general the chief function of a library is to provide a well-stocked and ordered laboratory in which students (a term I won't try to define) can work. Another is to lend its books to its own readers for home use; and every librarian has to meet the difficulties which lie in reconciling these two functions. But these do not mark the end of his duties: a library is not to be regarded only as an institution in which a reader may work with the aid of the material, organization, and staff peculiar to it; or from which he may borrow only those books it happens to possess and to be able to lend; because, on the one hand, the number of books in existence is so large that no library can possess more than a small fraction of them, and on the other, of all the books possessed by any library, some are never, and many are rarely, required by its own readers. Every library is in the constant position of needing for its readers books which it does not have, but which are available for loan in other libraries, and of having on its own shelves books not wanted by its own readers but which are required elsewhere.

It is therefore a necessary duty of all libraries, not only to keep their own houses in order, but to organize themselves so that by borrowing and lending they both obtain for their own readers as many as possible of the books they need, and at the same time vitalize their own stocks.

This is said with a full recognition of a librarian's duty to preserve literature for posterity. On that ground some books should not be lent, and others only with special precautions. But I believe that librarians have been inclined to do too much for posterity at the expense of service to their own times. That work should be left, more than it is, to the few great libraries in the world which are exempted either wholly or in part from such borrowing and lending, and given the main task of preserving and bibliographically recording literature.

Up to recent times development in all libraries has been restricted to internal affairs—collecting, housing, arranging, and cataloguing books for reference work and local lending, and the organization of individual libraries has been brought to a high stage of efficiency. There has been little co-operation between libraries, and it is only now that attempts are being made to organize it.

That seems to be roughly the purpose of co-operation. It is not a remedy for all the difficulties in library work. It is not a substitute for reference libraries—nothing can be a substitute for those, and it is not a labour-saving idea for any librarian—indeed, it will make more work for most. It is just a means whereby we can be of greater service to our readers and can make our resources and the results of our work fully used. These duties are now demanded of us; we can no longer be isolated and give the public service we could and should give, both because the quantity of books is so vast and the use of books essential to every branch of the community.

The main problem in co-operation is—how shall we so organize ourselves that

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every library may supply, with the minimum of cost, delay, and inconvenience to itself and others, any "serious" books for which it is asked?

In approaching this it has seemed clear that the greatest possible unit of co-operation is the nation; and that, in any large nation—after the essential national centre has been formed—each library should begin to co-operate either with its immediate neighbours or with its own kind: there are the two "schools" of co-operation—"regional," including *all* libraries within an area, and "classified," including only libraries of the same type, but not necessarily delimiting the area within any nation. With us opinion at present seems to be in favour of regional schemes—or for a compromise based on them—each having a centre linking up the constituent libraries and linking the whole scheme to others through the national centre. In any case it is on the efficiency of each individual library that the success of the whole work chiefly depends. Given the will to co-operate, every librarian's first and essential contribution to the work is to cultivate his own garden. That librarian is the best potential co-operator, who performs best, and keeps first in his mind, his duty to his own readers.

There is, naturally, no standard way of tackling the problem, because the right solution depends on the general characteristics of a country and especially on the nature of its library service. In one country there may be State, or some other, central control over most libraries; there may be already a practice of inter-library lending; there may be a national library which lends; there may be regions having some administrative autonomy; there may be a single, strong, association of librarians. In another country there may be only some or even none of these, or others yet again, and it is obvious that their presence or absence will materially affect the situation. But while it is true that to understand fully a scheme of co-operation a knowledge of the country concerned and its libraries is essential, we can get some appreciation of co-operation on the Continent if we remind ourselves of the chief points which differentiate continental library systems from our own. Most large continental libraries are State-controlled. They all lend. They are mostly of an "academic" type: few libraries of any importance deal in fiction. Printed catalogues are far commoner than they are with us. Public library systems like ours are not strong—except in Scandinavia and Holland. Special libraries, of course, exist, but nearly all attempts at co-operation have been between libraries of this academic type catering chiefly for the student in the humanities and pure sciences. That is so even with us, and it is an important point. That type of reader wants chiefly books or at any rate some definite piece of literature; workers in technical and commercial matters less often want books, and more often require periodicals, trade catalogues, press cuttings, illustrations, and even samples of goods, and most often require not a definite object at all but "information"—usually the latest information, and usually in a hurry. The former can generally describe the matter

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required, the latter generally cannot. The former can be catered for by union author catalogues of books, the latter cannot; their needs require subject-indexes of all sorts of special material, and information files: union author catalogues are of comparatively little use to them. This has to be remembered; for all that libraries can as yet do is to organize this business of finding books; and that is a big enough task. We have to see clearly the problem we are tackling, and the type of reader for which we are mainly working.

Roughly speaking, the achievements in co-operation have been greatest in the Teutonic and Scandinavian countries and least in the Latin countries. It is natural to take Germany first, because the work began here, in Prussia, where it was the outcome of library conditions peculiarly favourable to it. Prussia has eleven State libraries—ten university and the State library in Berlin; these are all of medium-large size, all of the same type and manned by staffs with the same education and training. In 1892 the Universities of Göttingen and Marburg arranged for a weekly interchange of books on loan. This was extended until in 1902 it included all the eleven State libraries and had become a general agreement to lend at all times. By 1908 most of the other German states had instituted similar systems between their own libraries, and in 1924 these were unified into a national system. In 1895 it was decided that a union catalogue of the Prussian State libraries should be made and printed. Cataloguing rules were compiled and issued from the State Library in Berlin to the other libraries, which were requested to adopt them and alter the whole of their existing catalogues to conform to them. Meanwhile, a copy of the catalogue of the State Library was made and circulated in batches to the others, which marked in it the entries for those books they also possessed, and inserted entries for the rest of their books. By 1917 the whole, now a union catalogue of the eleven libraries, was reassembled at Berlin. Since that time it has been completed up to the end of 1929, and the printing has begun: two volumes came out in 1931-2 and the whole will contain about 2½ million entries. In 1905 an information bureau was founded at the State Library in Berlin. Its chief duty is to trace books and give bibliographical information, and it forms the keystone of the German exchange lending system, which now includes over 800 libraries. The smaller libraries send their enquiries to a regional central library which, if it cannot supply them, forwards them to Berlin, where the information bureau is successful with about 76 per cent. of over 20,000 enquiries every year. The only cost to the applicant for obtaining a book from any part of Germany is the equivalent of 2d., the information bureau is maintained entirely by the State, and postages are paid by the libraries.

In Holland the work may be divided into three groups corresponding to the chief fields of library service: (1) the academic libraries; (2) the "special," chiefly technical, libraries; (3) the popular (public) libraries. The first began in 1921,

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when the librarians of the Royal Library at The Hague and of the University libraries (Amsterdam, Leiden, Utrecht, Gröningen) got the Ministry of Education interested in the scheme and a State committee on library service was formed. In 1922 the Royal Library began to compile a union catalogue of the chief academic libraries—there are now twenty in the scheme. This was done by cutting up the printed catalogues of these libraries, pasting the entries on cards, and amalgamating the whole. The cutting and pasting was well and cheaply done at a women's prison. The catalogue is kept at the Royal Library, which works it, and acts as an information bureau. Like the Prussian, it is a bibliographical catalogue, with full entries and cross-references, but unlike that, was never intended to be printed.

In 1928 the Technical "Highschool" (university) at Delft started a similar scheme among technical libraries. A union catalogue of these, now thirty-one in number, is being compiled and kept at Delft, which is the information bureau for the scheme.

The work among the popular libraries has not got beyond the stage of local organizations, but much lending goes on between them, and some "join" either or both of the other schemes through the medium of other libraries in them.

In Switzerland, which is so highly decentralized politically, co-operation has met with notable success. There is no federal legislation affecting libraries and no federal Ministry of Education, and so the work has developed in the various Cantons which form natural areas for regional co-operation. In Zürich six libraries were amalgamated into the Zentralbibliothek in 1914, and this is now the centre of a local scheme embracing twenty libraries. In Geneva the Public and University Library is the centre for a similar scheme started in 1925, and now includes over fifty libraries in the locality. There is a union catalogue in each centre. The National Library, founded at Bern in 1895, has, since 1907, been the national centre for these and other schemes. It is now compiling, by a process similar to that used at The Hague, a national union catalogue. The institution of the national scheme is entirely due to the Swiss Library Association. Postage on books lent between libraries is free. Recently Germany has proposed that the Swiss and Austrian libraries should enter the German scheme.

In Austria, libraries have always co-operated closely with those in Germany, but in 1920 (after proposals dating from 1908) an information bureau was founded at the National Library in Vienna. Through it some 500 Austrian libraries co-operate. From the beginning of 1931 a printed union catalogue of additions to thirty-two of these libraries, including the National Library, has been issued, and the bureau has compiled a subject-index covering the 500 libraries. Apart from these tools and printed catalogues, the bureau relies on enquiry lists sent out to the chief libraries. It is annually successful with about 70 per cent. of enquiries received, working with a minimum of organization and costs.

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In Denmark there are conditions more similar to those in Great Britain, chiefly in the existence of a strong system of public libraries. These co-operate together with the two university libraries (Copenhagen and Aarhus), the Royal Library at Copenhagen, and libraries of other kinds. The first central library was formed at Copenhagen in 1912; now there are twenty-seven as centres for regions which cover the whole country and link up all the 846 libraries in Denmark, which all lend.

There are no union catalogues: enquiries are dealt with first by the central libraries, next by any other libraries to which these, guided by printed catalogues, may send them, and then by the information bureau at Copenhagen—an institution not attached to any library, but which works in close touch with the other libraries in that city.

This brief survey must be closed with no more than a note that good work is being done in Sweden and Norway, Hungary, Belgium, Italy, and, of course, the U.S.A. Brief as it is, it may form a background for considering some points which arise in co-operation between libraries.

THE RELATION BETWEEN CO-OPERATION AND HOME SERVICE

It was said above that co-operation will mean more work for most libraries. But this work is, on the one hand, merely a natural development of home service, which must always be developing; and on the other, the vitalizing of resources which would otherwise not be used. To-day we catalogue and classify minutely, we issue readers' guides and other aids and advertisements, we have open access, and we lend. We keep other things than books—illustrations, slides, cuttings, maps, and music; we sometimes have readers' advisers, we have children's libraries. These were all innovations at one time, but now they are part of our regular home service. Now we say we must obtain as many "serious" books for our readers as we can, in addition to those we can buy, and also make as full use as possible of our stock and work. This is nothing but a natural development. That it will bring more work is no argument against it if we agree that the results will be of value. It is even possible that we may find that some of the work we do now is of little value, and be able to lessen it in favour of this other. We may be able to do this in, for example, cataloguing, the keeping of statistics, and the handling of fiction. Co-operation is intended to be of assistance to home service. As it develops its central institutions will in no way supersede individual libraries, but will always be subsidiary to those in their work, and a subsidiary strength. It will attract readers to all libraries, because they will get the attitude of mind that they can see, even in the smallest library, all books, within reason, which they may want.

As to impairing one's home efficiency by lending, that certainly has difficulties. The point to remember is that lending is never compulsory, and that the principle of

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any librarian must be "My own readers first." As time goes on and union catalogues develop and centres get to know where books are, this difficulty will greatly diminish.

CO-OPERATION AND SPECIALIZATION

It is clear that these mutually react as cause and effect. Either must do something to bring about the other. They cannot exist apart. Whatever we feel about specialization, it is a condition of the times. We know that no library can approach "completeness" and that although the adequacy of a library's service increases with the size of its stock—usually in a diminishing ratio to that—the general inadequacy is so great that, in fact, every library is forced to concentrate on some subjects at the expense of others—i.e. to specialize. But even the smallest so-called "special" library—professedly so called—cannot possess all it needs—partly because you cannot be "complete" in any subject which is at all of general interest, and partly because no subject can be studied by itself. It is, therefore, but a reasonable thing that we should specialize to a certain extent, and also borrow! It is also reasonable that we should spread out this specialization so that together we cover, as far as may be, all the ground.

It is, of course, clear that specialization is not to be made into a fetish, but only to be used. If it were carried to such a point that the value of those of our libraries which have to serve a general public was seriously impaired as reference libraries, it would be absolutely wrong. Much duplication will always be necessary and right.

INTER-RELATION OF SMALL AND LARGE LIBRARIES IN CO-OPERATION

It is not easy for small and great libraries to work together, even if they are of the same kind, so that some schemes have not only been restricted to libraries of the same type, but to those of a similar size—as originally in Prussia. A big library can usually spare an assistant to work, for example, in contributing to a union catalogue. A small library cannot. Yet the general feeling is that small libraries get most out of co-operation. They do; but the position can, I think, be misinterpreted. Small libraries borrow more than they lend when a scheme starts, and until a union catalogue is finished, because the centre will be in a large library; and since all the large libraries will be quicker in contributing to the catalogue, they will receive most requests to lend. Afterwards the small libraries should take a larger share in the lending. With the important exception of our County Libraries, a small library will ask for less books than a large one. Small libraries are often highly specialized, and together their stocks should be of at least as much use to a large library as it will be to them. And every chance should be given to the small libraries to lend: it makes for the smooth working of a scheme if the general feeling can be that each library is contributing its proper share. So that if a

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large library should endeavour unduly to keep the lending in its own hands in order to help the others, the effort would be admirable, but would not be co-operation. An attitude of mind in a large library to lend but not to borrow would be only less bad in a scheme of co-operation than the opposite. The effort which many large libraries have made to ensure the establishment of schemes by bearing the brunt of lending in their initial stages is, of course, wholly admirable. It is to be hoped that the large libraries may make use of specialization in the small libraries, and rely on those for the supply of books in certain subjects; for not only will they all then be able to cover a wider field of literature, but the large libraries may free some of their resources for bibliographical work, of value not only to themselves, but to the community at large.

The small libraries will get most out of co-operation, but the large libraries can get much out of it actually in the books they may borrow. They all owe something to the community at large and stand to gain further from that the more they assist it. It is probable that they will receive services not greatly less than those they give. Even if this is not so, it is the duty of all libraries to see that their resources are used as fully as possible, and it is possible for most, and especially for large libraries, to extend their service at the cost of little, if any, detriment to their home service.

REGIONAL AND "CLASSIFIED" CO-OPERATION

In Great Britain the first organized scheme was a "classified" one—that between the university libraries throughout the kingdom which was started in 1925 and has been working with success ever since. In 1922 the National Central Library had begun its system of outlier libraries which was, in a sense, also "classified," since it consisted entirely of "special" libraries until 1927, when municipal and county libraries began to join; but that was always intended to be, as it is, a national system, serving all libraries. Since 1927 attempts have been concentrated on forming regional systems, but most of the numerous small schemes of this kind have been between public libraries only, or public and county libraries. The large regional systems started in 1931 in the North, West Midlands, and Wales have included libraries of all types, but in the proposed system for the South Eastern counties, it is, I believe, intended to include, in the first instance, only public and county libraries. The chief reasons against all-inclusive regional co-operation are: (1) as the number of libraries in a scheme increases, so do the complications of its organization; (2) it is difficult for libraries varying greatly in size or efficiency to co-operate successfully; (3) co-operation is easiest between libraries of the same type. Among libraries of different species there is a wide divergence in methods and objects which is bound to cause difficulties when they attempt to co-operate, even though these difficulties are very greatly lessened if the differences are appreciated by all concerned.

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But the desirability of including all libraries is great; on the one hand, our public libraries are so numerous, important, and many-sided that they are invaluable to any scheme; on the other, the special libraries cannot easily be grouped among themselves, and also they offer a contribution to the public libraries as valuable as that which those can offer them. With regard to small libraries, of any kind, their inclusion is to be desired both because valuable books are often found in unlikely places, and because there may be an added psychological strength if all are included.

The advantages of grouping libraries regionally are obvious. The librarians know each other personally; they also know something about the other libraries—the whereabouts of special collections and of experts on special subjects. But the dominant advantage is that of quick communication—personal visits can be made, there is the telephone for messages, transport of books is quick, and this may be done by messenger or motor-van more quickly than and at least as cheaply as by post; cataloguers can, if necessary, visit libraries to compile the union catalogue, and frequent meetings of the committee of the scheme are possible.

With regard to cost, it is clear that to set up a bureau and form a union catalogue requires immediate capital and an annual income. For our regional systems the necessary capital outlay (likely to be spent in three years) seems to be about £2,000, and the annual income (required at latest in the fourth year and onwards) to be not less than £250. So far, the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees have generously solved the problem of capital outlay, and it seems that a system containing about fifty libraries can comfortably produce the annual income by subscriptions from these. Subscriptions are in most cases based on the population served by each library, or, where this is impossible, on some system which is not a payment for use made of the scheme. There would be the obvious dangers in this latter that a poor library might be compelled to restrict its borrowings to the detriment of the objects of the work, and that a centre might be tempted to favour a rich library as an actual or potential subscriber of large amounts—to bring a commercial spirit into the work and turn the system into a massed subscription library. In the proposed South-eastern scheme a part of the subscriptions is to be allotted to the National Central Library, the foundation on which all the schemes rests.

CENTRAL ORGANIZATION

A national scheme of co-operation is, of course, greatly assisted if there is a central agency through which the work is planned and directed—as the State in Germany and elsewhere. A strong link between librarians is an essential feature for its success—as is shown in Switzerland, where, also, the interest of the State has resulted in free postage on books lent. In Great Britain there is, as yet, no control; but the Librarian of the National Central Library has been a member of the com-

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mittee of each bureau from its beginning; and a National Committee on Regional Library Co-operation, to act as an advisory body on matters concerning existing or potential regional areas, and to provide a link between regional bureaux and the National Central Library (where its headquarters are situated) was formed at the Library Association Cheltenham Conference in 1931.



VALUATIONS

By FRANK M. GARDNER

Wireless listening groups : H.M.S.O., 9d. net.

A VERY interesting pamphlet this, and one which librarians will do well to study. It is, of course, the report of the H.M. Inspectors of Schools who visited a number of listening groups in the spring of 1932. You will remember them coming. The one who came to the group in which I was interested was heralded with some formality and an exhortation that I should be sure that the group be held on that night. Evidently previous H.M. Inspectors had visited groups whose existence was more theoretical than real.

However, there was a very good group that night: the inspector sat quietly in a corner and behaved himself very well, and later, over coffee and sandwiches with a few of the people who had been told of his presence, revealed himself as amazingly well up in current literary gossip.

But I am afraid that not all H.M. Inspectors had as good a time as mine declared he had had. There is a tone of vagueness about this report. The reader has a feeling that the investigators have wept, not over such quantities of sand, but because there was very little sand at all. They agree, of course, that wireless talks are a good thing. There is no doubt of that. The marvellous efficiency of the B.B.C. arrangements in the matter of talks, hampered as they are by an obvious censorship, is a continual source of wonder to me. The talks themselves are open minded and forward looking: the speakers are as brilliant a galaxy as one could wish for. One expects efficiency from the B.B.C., of course, as one expects efficiency from the Underground.

The inspectors, however, are not reporting on the B.B.C. They are reporting on the Wireless Discussion Groups, which are a very different matter. With what seems to me some hesitation they venture the opinion that Wireless Discussion Groups are also a good thing. But . . . yes, one is afraid there is a but.

There were at the time of the investigation 369 listening groups in the area under review, comprising about 4,000 people (though the report warns us to accept this

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figure with caution). It doesn't sound bad. But when one considers that the formation of these groups had been advertised by the finest means of propaganda in existence; that they were sponsored by education authorities, public libraries, the W.E.A., and various other public bodies; that the series of talks was the most ambitious undertaken by the B.B.C., then it doesn't sound very good. One may of course expect progress. One may expect that the numbers will double or even treble in a few years' time. But one is afraid that they will not expand indefinitely.

From the remarks I have made from time to time about listening groups (and quite a number will, I think, be found scattered in the back numbers of these notes), it may have been inferred that I do not like them. That is not the case. I am very much in favour of listening groups—if they are conducted on the right lines.

At present they are not conducted on the right lines. They are firmly tucked under the wing of that horrible bird of prey called adult education, and until they are rescued, they are not likely to develop very far. For the ordinary Englishman does not like adult education. He does not even know what it is, though it sounds unpleasant. (Ask a hundred of your readers if they have ever heard of the W.E.A. and see what answer you get.)

I wish people in the Adult Education movement would realize this. I wish they would realize that it is impracticable to apply the same methods to adults as are applied to children. One can force children to sit in front of a teacher and absorb facts, because they cannot get away, but one cannot do the same with adults, because they can, and will, get away. The Englishman does not like being talked at. The politician who talks down to him does not get any votes. The preacher who "preaches" is rewarded with an empty church. The after-dinner speaker who is solemn is only greeted with somnolence. Sad, but true. The adult, being a free agent, must be approached by more subtle means than appeals to his reason.

This, then, is why I object to listening groups. The B.B.C. people arrange talks of surprising topicality and general interest. They engage speakers who can talk in an easy and unbuttoned manner. And then the listening groups which are ancillary to the talks begin to surround themselves with an atmosphere of sterility and earnest investigation. It will not do. The Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education must realize that listening groups, if the present lines of development are followed, will become mainly a meeting-place for cranks. The crank will go anywhere where he can air his crankiness. But the average Englishman will not willingly go anywhere to be educated.

For what reason, then, is he likely to go to listening groups? Listen to the conversation in a railway carriage or in a public-house, and you have your answer. He will go to talk. He will talk, badly perhaps, uninformed probably, prejudiced almost certainly, for hours on end. Sometimes, though H.M. Inspectors probably would not admit it, he will talk good sense.

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There are nowadays a decreasing number of facilities for talking. The home becomes more and more nothing but a dormitory, while public-houses, once the main centres of real conversation, resound with strident melody. With the increasing tendency towards artificial amusement, the amusement of sitting by a fire and talking things over is rapidly being forgotten. The wireless discussion group gives an opportunity for reviving that pastime.

But not, oh, definitely not, on the lines indicated by this report. I notice here that "the value of real discussion lies in being able to take a particular topic out of a partisan or highly controversial sphere into an atmosphere detached, disinterested, and scholarly." That sort of discussion might be possible in heaven, but God save me from ever taking part in it on earth.

The utmost we can hope to achieve by discussion at present is to make ordinary people see that they are not the best possible citizens in the best of possible worlds. Make them see that what they think is reason might only be prejudice, that what they think are errors might only be truths outside their comprehension. This brings what is possible somewhat nearer to what is desirable. Even then there must be some method of approach.

It is a pity that the people most qualified to develop listening groups along human lines have so far taken very little interest in them. Libraries are certainly mentioned in this report, but only, one feels, as a matter of courtesy. On one page it is stated that "nor must the interest displayed by certain library committees be overlooked." How much interest there actually was is not stated, but some idea of it may be gained from the fact that out of 255 sets used, only seven were provided by public libraries. Now this seems to me a shameful thing. Dozens of librarians have attacked the problem of turning our uncultured readers into cultured ones. It is generally recognized that the first step is the most difficult. I myself, who have always protested against the formalizing of our mission, have seen the difficulty of that initial contact. Here is a glorious weapon to our hand, and we have not used it.

What organization is more qualified than the public library to play Mason to the B.B.C.'s Fortnum? We number among our readers not only the genuine seekers after knowledge, but also a large number of the people who do not know the difference between knowledge and what their newspapers tell them each morning, who have never taken part in a movement in their lives, who instinctively recoil on being approached by a public body. Not only that, but it is seen in this report that the talks are only a beginning; that they must be followed up by reading to do any good.

We have the means of propaganda all ready in our libraries. Let us advertise that there is a wireless downstairs, in a quiet room with a decent fire and comfortable chairs (most branch libraries have staff rooms), and that anyone is invited

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to go down and listen to the speaker and chat about it afterwards if he wishes. Let us turn our faces from this business of leaders, and discipline, and the consciousness at the back of our mind that this is education. Instead, we will leaven the assembly with a few well-informed and open-minded people who will unobtrusively help the talk along. Then we might have some real discussion groups.

It can be done. It needs lots of enthusiasm and some hard work, but it can be done.

Bethnal Green public libraries: Books of 1932. Price 1d.

Up to a point, description of Bethnal Green's annual review (which has become one of the few publications emanating from public libraries to be looked forward to) is easy. The cover sets out to be Kaufferian. It is. The contents set out to be comprehensive. They are. The arrangement sets out to be simple. It is. I particularly like the cross-headings which trumpet the reader's approach to something out of the ordinary.

I am always amazed at the catholicity of the book selection at Bethnal Green. Apart from the diligent reading of reviews which is in evidence on every page (and I feel that Bethnal Green has sources of book information denied to most of us), the podgy hand of the censor is never felt there.

No one ever says, "Not quite the sort of book for public libraries, don't you think." No one ever says, "I don't agree with what this man thinks," and proceeds to strike the book out of the order list. No one ever says, "We must improve our readers," and prohibits such books as *I am a fugitive* and *Merrily we go to bell*. As the preface says, the selection is as varied and comprehensive as possible. Bad books as well as good books, silly ones and serious. Among others which I have never seen in any other library list are *Pretty pictures*, which made the finest Christmas present to a lady I have ever been able to give; Joyce's *Two tales of Sbem and Shaun*; Britton's *Spacetime inn* . . . I could go on for a long time.

So far, as I said, description is easy. It is when I begin to comment on the annotations that I search for adjectives in vain. I might call them copious, and point to the four extracts from reviews given as a note to Trotsky's *Russian revolution*. I might call them witty, and point to the note on *Señor Bum*—" . . . A scampering style, a sort of Deadwood Diction." I might call them penetrating and point to the note on Hemingway's *Death in the afternoon*—"His prose has the directness of the goal kick." I might use all these adjectives and more, and still fail to convey the peculiar flavour of these notes.

I will content myself with quoting a little, so that you can share my appreciation.

Of Alan Bott's *Our mothers* it is said: " . . . Another Al Bott memorial to the late lamented Victorian era." Of Collins's *Facts of fiction*: "A breathless

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book which Dickens's Mr. Jingle might have written." Of Eliot's *Selected essays*, it is said with singular penetration, that "Mr. Eliot writes as a poet but not poetically"; while Rachel Ferguson "writes for *Punch*. But she can be really funny." Leavis's *New bearings in English poetry* is tagged with: "Sweet are the uses of perversity . . ."; but Virginia Woolf is complimented with: "When Mrs. Woolf writes criticism, the columns of our austere critical break out, so to speak, in leaves and flowers."

I must stop, before I am sued for breach of copyright. But I think I have given you enough to show that here is the art of annotation in its highest form.

Things we have to contend with

In England.—I can vouch for the truth of the following story:

A certain English library, which shall be nameless, recently imported some books from Germany. The books were subject to examination at the Customs, but no trouble was anticipated, since books are admitted free of duty. Unfortunately, as is often the case with German books, these had silk headbands, false, of course, and purely decorative. Silk is subject to a duty of 12½ per cent., and one would not have complained if duty had been charged on the silk. But that did not satisfy our zealous Customs and Excise Department. They decreed that the headbands were an integral part of the books, which thus became articles partly composed of silk. They then proceeded to charge 12½ per cent. duty on the value of the books. So far representations have been of no avail.

In U.S.A.—Extract from the *Wilson bulletin*, March 1933:

" . . . One of the most useful features of the jacket is the blurb. By extracting the most telling bit of description from the blurb as an annotation for newspaper lists of new books, much of the time usually employed in writing annotations is saved."

In order, of course, that more time may be spent in making up lists of orders from publishers' announcements.



THE DIVISIONS

EASTERN DIVISION

MR. C. SMITH, of Ipswich, has resigned from his position as secretary of the division, and has been succeeded by Mr. F. Bale, Central Public Library, Norwich.

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MIDLAND DIVISION

JOINT MEETING OF THE BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT AND WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE BRANCHES AND THE ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS SECTION, MIDLAND DIVISION.

A considerable gathering of Welsh and Midland librarians met at Shrewsbury on Wednesday, 5th April, under the chairmanship of the President of the Library Association, Sir Henry Miers, M.A., D.Sc., LL.D., the occasion being a joint meeting of the Birmingham and District and Wales and Monmouthshire Branches and the Association of Assistant Librarians Section, Midland Division. A civic welcome was accorded in the Council Chamber at Shrewsbury Castle by the Mayor, Mr. Councillor R. Mansell.

The President then delivered a brief address, in the course of which he suggested that there was a necessity for investigation directed towards the discovery of unsatisfied needs in various fields of literature, which he felt sure existed, but were not known to authors and publishers. Librarians and booksellers were, by virtue of their close contact with the reading public, in an exceptionally favourable position to discover the desires of their patrons, and might render valuable assistance to publishers by making known the need for books which are at present non-existent.

The President was followed by Mr. Ernest Evans, M.A., LL.B., Member of Parliament for the University of Wales, who paid tribute to the work of the Association in fostering a just appreciation on the part of the public of libraries and the work of the officials who control them. He described public libraries as being, not merely reading-rooms, but refreshment-rooms to which an increasing number of the general public resorted for refreshment of the mind and soul. One of the remarkable features of modern life was the work that was being done in the field of adult education, in which libraries were playing a great part. Statesmen were apt to impress upon the public the importance of using their leisure time in an advantageous manner, and in this respect he could conceive of no greater centre of service than that provided by the library system of this country.

Mr. P. E. Adams, A.L.A., Librarian of Shropshire County Library, then read a paper entitled "A Box of books," in which he modestly, but none the less effectively, outlined the work of his library and its 230 local centres. He paid high tribute to the services rendered by the voluntary local librarians, and said that while in Shropshire they had, speaking in a general way, achieved their aim of providing a library service for the whole of the County Library area, they did not claim that the ideal had been attained. They did, however, provide a service which was very much better than the villages and small towns could provide for themselves. Each centre received a new consignment of books every four months,

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with the exception of eight of the larger towns, where exchanges took place every six months. He believed that the average country reader was not very different from his neighbour in the large town; his non-fiction reading was as extensive and as careful as that of the town reader. The total book-stock of the County Library now approached 45,000 volumes, about 24 books per hundred of the population of the library's area.

A vote of thanks to the three speakers was proposed by Mr. H. Farr, Chief Librarian Cardiff City Libraries, seconded by Mr. F. J. Patrick, Deputy City Librarian Birmingham, and carried with acclamation, as also was a motion of thanks to the Mayor, to Alderman W. Gowen Cross, Chairman of the Shrewsbury Public Library Committee, and to Mr. E. J. James, Librarian of Shrewsbury, which was introduced by Mr. J. H. Davies, Honorary Secretary of the Midland Division of the Association of Assistant Librarians Section, and supported by Councillor W. A. Howell, Chairman of the Glamorgan County Library Committee.

After tea, most of the Welsh members left for home, but the Midland members visited the Library of Shrewsbury School, where they listened to an interesting address on the Library and its contents given by the Librarian, Mr. J. B. Oldham, and afterwards inspected the books, manuscripts, and fine bindings which the Library possesses in profusion.

Before leaving, the party inspected the County Library Headquarters and the Public Library and Museum.

YORKSHIRE DIVISION

By the kind invitation of Mr. E. Osborne, F.L.A., County Librarian, Derbyshire, a meeting was held at the Stavelay Regional Branch Library on 10th May. About sixty members assembled at the Branch, and were afforded an opportunity of inspecting a type of building that is comparatively new to county library practice. Derbyshire has been divided into six library areas, and when the scheme is completed a regional centre will operate in each area. Four of these centres, including the one at Stavelay, are now in operation. The building is well planned, well lighted, and commodious. Taking into consideration its low cost, a building of this type might well be imitated by authorities other than county libraries. This course has already been taken by at least one public library.

After the inspection Mr. Osborne delivered an address entitled "County library policy, present and future." After a brief reference to the early stages of development Mr. Osborne spoke of the present problems of a county library system and the manner in which they were being tackled. Speaking of the future policy he stated that he hoped to see closer co-operation between the various county libraries

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and also between county and municipal libraries. Many questions were put to Mr. Osborne at the close of his address. Arising out of these questions a resolution was passed stating "that this meeting of the Yorkshire Division recommends that the Hon. Secretary of the County Library Section of the L.A. requests the L.A. to co-opt on to their panel of examiners for all examination questions relating to county libraries, qualified librarians engaged in county library work."

A delightful tea was very generously provided by the staff of the Derby County Library.

The evening session was occupied with an address by Miss E. F. Wragg, Deputy Librarian, West Riding, on "County library finance, with particular reference to differential rating." Miss Wragg dealt with her subject in a very thorough manner. Each person present received a bulletin consisting of four closely cyclostyled foolscap sheets containing useful details of county library finance. To assistants studying for the examinations this material, along with Miss Wragg's able address, will prove to be extremely useful.

The thanks of the members tendered to Miss Wragg, Mr. Osborne, and his staff brought to a close an enjoyable and very instructive meeting.

G. P. JACKSON.



CORRESPONDENCE

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPT.,
CENTRAL LIBRARY,
SHEFFIELD, Y.

TO THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

21st April, 1933.

I suppose I must blame my notorious turgidity of thought and expression for Mr. Munford's inability to understand my article in the *Library World* (1930, p. 152); but I had hoped that a later article (1932, p. 147) had made the position clear. Even taking the passage quoted as it stands, however: "Wallace, Sapper, Dell, Sabatini and other popular writers were purchased in fifties of each title; *standard textbooks in all classes, plays*, and indeed any books which were always out were duplicated to saturation point. New readers flocked to the libraries," it is difficult to understand how Mr. Munford can read that to mean "a Sheffield plan of *fiction stocking*," when it clearly states that the principle of meeting mass demand is applied equally to "*standard textbooks in all classes, plays, etc.*" His argument is that all libraries with heavily increased issues stock greater proportions of popular fiction than libraries whose issues have not increased (the supposed Sheffield plan),

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and that these issues are almost wholly confined to that type of book. This generalization is readily disproved by my own figures, which in two years jumped 1,500,000 in total, whilst the percentage issue of non-fiction rose during the same period; and Mr. Munford has failed to produce any records which prove his case in regard to other libraries. I can only assume, therefore, that his statement has no sounder basis than an imagination excited by reading the low type of fiction provided by library annual reports. There are obviously no limits to the instruction in library method he can draw from such a fruitful combination, but it is a pity that he should have allowed unsupported assertion to masquerade as fact in an otherwise excellent article. I find particularly intriguing Mr. Munford's novel conclusion that libraries which stock popular fiction on a non-existence "plan" obtain certain results in disproportionate fiction issues which he cannot produce figures to prove. In such a mood your correspondent is simply irresistible.

Yours, etc.,

J. P. LAMB,
Chief Librarian.

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